

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 H-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8663

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, BG, US
SUBJ: CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN CHITTAGONG HILL TRIBESMEN

REF: A) STATE 079921; B) 77 DACCA 6637

1. FOR DECADES, THERE HAS BEEN ETHNIC TENSION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS TRIBAL GROUPS OF THE HILL TRACTS AND THE PLAINS-DWELLING BENGALIS. THE LATTER ARE MUSLIM AND THE TRIBESMEN ARE GENERALLY BUDDHIST WITH A STRONG ETHNIC RESEMBLANCE TO THE HILL TRIBES OF BURMA. TENSIONS INTENSIFIED IN THE LATE 1960S WHEN THE KAPTAI DAM WAS COMPLETED, CREATING A LAKE WHICH FLOODED THE TRIBAL LANDS USED FOR PINEAPPLE CULTIVATION.

2. THE PRIMARY GROUP GENERATING THE UNREST IS THE CHAKKMA TRIBE, THE LARGEST OF THE DOZEN OR SO TRIBES. SPORADIC CLASHES HAVE OCCURRED DURING THE PAST YEAR BETWEEN THE BANGLADESH ARMY (REF B) AND IN SOME INSTANCES ACTIVISTS OF THE LEFTIST POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTING THE CHAKKMAS, THE JANATA SANGSTA, OR PEOPLE'S PARTY (SEE DACCA MEMCON OF 14 APRIL 1977). THE PARTY'S PRINCIPAL AIM IS TO AGITATE FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY, WHICH THE BDG IS UNWILLING TO CONSIDER. REGULAR BANGLADESH ARMY UNITS HAVE BEEN POSTED

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IN THE AREA FOR AT LEAST THE PAST YEAR AND PERIODIC REPORTS ARE HEARD OF RAPE AND LOOTING BY THE SOLDIERS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS RECENTLY OF A MAJOR INCREASE IN VIOLENCE.

3. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO SOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY AS A WHOLE, IT SEEMS UNFOUNDED TO

SAY THAT THERE HAVE BEEN "SHARP INCREASES" IN INCIDENTS
OF TORTURE AND DETAINMENT, AS PER REFTEL A. RATHER,
THERE IS IN THE HILL TRACTS A CONTINUING POLITICAL,
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEM, THE SEVERITY OF WHICH
REMAINS UNCLEAR.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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